

HORTULANUS

Official Publication of Ku-ring-gai Horticultural Society Inc.

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JUNE 2026

COMING EVENTS

- June 2** KHS Meeting: Speaker is Taylor Harrison from Staying Active who will speak about 'Managing Arthritis and Mobility in the Garden'.
- June 11-13** North Shore Orchid Society - Show and Sales at St Ives Shopping Village. Thurs/Fri. 9am-5pm, Sun. 9pm-3pm.
- June 12** Eryldene, 17 McIntosh St, Gordon. Open: 10am to 12.30pm.
- June 14** Eryldene, 17 McIntosh St, Gordon. Open day 10am-3pm with a display and demonstration by the Sogetsu School of Ikebana.
- June 27/28** Mingara Orchid Fair, Mingara Recreation Club, Mingara Drive, Tumby Umbi. Sat. 9-5pm, Sun. 9-3pm Entry free.
- July 7** KHS Meeting: The main speaker is Ray Kearney on 'The Interdependence of Species: Insects, Fungi and Plants'
- July 8-13** KHS Trip to the Sunshine Coast, Queensland.
- July 10** Eryldene, 17 McIntosh St, Gordon. Open garden 10-12.30pm Enq. www.eryldene.org.au
- July 11/12** Annual National Camellia Show at Ravenswood School.

MEMBER NEWS

It was a cool but luckily dry evening when some 48 members and friends gathered at the hall for our May meeting. Unfortunately our speaker, Ian Thompson, was unable to give his talk due to family illness so his place was taken by Libby Birley (at very short notice). Ian will speak to us later in the year.

Members are still puzzled by the lights flickering on and off at about 7.15pm. The reason for this is to alert members that the judging of the Show Bench is about to start and members are requested to move to their seats so that the judges can view the Show Bench unimpeded.

OUTINGS

Our trip to the Queensland Garden Festival and Sunshine Coast from 8th to 12/13th July is now full. We have established a waiting list as it is almost inevitable that not everyone so far booked will be able to make it. If you are thinking that you might like to come along, please let Helen Gilkes know at the June meeting or phone her on 9144 4826.

SHOW BENCH

It was still a bit of an in-between-seasons display this month with roses, hibiscus, salvias and a dahlia or two sharing the bench with camellias, azaleas and chrysanthemums. There were a couple of the more unusual exhibits - the bright red *Megaskepasma erythrochlamys* (Brazilian Red Cloak), a lovely red-leaved cordyline and the dainty flowers of *Clerodendron wallichii*. There were also some Banksia exhibits in great condition and a couple of well-flowered bromeliads. An unusual exhibit in the Vegie section was an Jerusalem artichoke. It was pleasing to see three nice looking exhibits of compost. The Decorative section was just a bit light-on, unfortunately but what was there was very pleasing.

GARDEN TABLE

The Garden Table had a number of interesting plants looking for a home. They included the wonderful *Brilliantaisia* which provides a blaze of blue flowers - providing you have some room for it, yellow Iris, red Begonias, Agapanthus, variegated Ivy and some succulents (dark red Aeoniums). What a choice! Don't forget to check out the Garden Table each meeting - you never know what you may find and all at a very reasonable price.

RAFFLE

There were three very nice plants donated by the Society on offer - a blue salvia, a cyclamen and a bacopa. Other prizes, donated by members, included some coir matting, a watering can, a bucket and two books, one on roses and one on fuchsias. Many thanks to those people for their donations. Your donations are always welcome - something nice that you wouldn't mind winning yourself. \$2 gets you three tickets so don't miss out.

MAIN SPEAKER MAY

As our scheduled speaker was unable to attend, Libby Birley, a garden designer, very kindly stepped into his place to give us a talk on down-sizing your garden. Libby first took us through the various reasons we may want or need to down-size. These include:

- * I don't have time to garden any more
- * My garden is too large for me to manage now
- * I need to get my garden ready to sell
- * My garden no longer gives me a sense of accomplishment
- * I am no longer able to garden due to my age and physical limitations

Libby has come up with some very workable solutions to these problems:

- * Prioritise! If you have multiple garden areas, then prioritise which ones to keep and which ones to either reduce in size, eliminate or turn into lawn
- * Eliminate fussy, high-maintenance plants to reduce your gardening workload
- * Simplify your landscape by replacing multiple species or varieties with a select few
- * Replace high-maintenance perennials with low or no-maintenance choices
- * Go native!
- * Identify ways to make gardening easier such as using raised beds that allow you to garden standing up

If you are able to find a volunteer to help you occasionally, that would be great. If not, and you can afford it, hire someone. Make a list in advance of the gardening tasks to be completed and provide complete instructions for your helper so there is no confusion about what needs to be done. This is particularly important with jobs like pruning.



Libby has her landscaping business in our local area and can be contacted by phone: 0411 082 380 or by email: info@libbybirleygardendesign.com.au. She also has a website: www.libbybirleygardendesign.com.au.

Main Speaker June: This will be Taylor Harrison who is the founder and director of Staying Active, a company that focuses on keeping older people active through exercise. Taylor will speak to us about managing arthritis and mobility when gardening.

MEMBER SPEAKER MAY

Our member speaker was Christine Erratt who showed something of the fascinating life of the Leaf-Cutter Bee.



They are found on every continent except Antarctica and are what are called solitary bees, that is, they do not form colonies. They are able to incise almost a complete circle from a leaf and they use these pieces to line a nest in a suitable hollow in a wall or bank. The female bee then stocks the cell with nectar and pollen before laying a single egg in the cell and sealing it up. She will continue constructing these cocoons until she has filled up the space she has available. The young larvae will emerge from the egg, eat the food she has provided and go through five stages of development before emerging as a fully formed bee. In the meantime, we are left with this



Member Speaker June: Bob Ballinger will give us a talk on Cactus Gardens.

HOW TO CONTROL WEEDS by Virginia Fischer

Can we ever completely get rid of weeds? Probably not. But we can still try! After all, weeds harm other plants by competing for nutrients and sunlight and they can also be toxic to animals and humans.

Why do weeds take over?

Weeds have characteristics that give them advantages over other plants. For example, weeds produce lots of seeds; they grow very fast and mature early; and they have very effective seed dispersal methods. We can combat these tendencies by removing weeds when they are young before they flower and by removing seedheads as soon as they appear to stop the release of seeds.

Three ways to deal with weeds:

Prevention – by using good gardening practices

Mulch and replenish mulch regularly

Weed when the soil is moist as this makes weeds easier to remove

Use dense planting and groundcovers to crowd out weeds

Mulch after planting and weeding to suppress weed seeds in the soil that have been disturbed and may now germinate

Don't walk around your garden if you have weeds on your shoes

Provide more sunlight and good drainage

Keep lawns healthy by fertilising, aerating and topdressing.

* **Physical removal** - Note that this method is only feasible when weeding a small area.

Pull off or bag seedheads before you dig

Dig out all parts of tap roots so they don't regrow e.g. Dandelions

Pour boiling water on weeds e.g. Creeping Oxalis

Use a knife to remove weeds in pavers

Dig out all parts of Onion Weed by hand

Use a flame gun to burn small weeds

Mow lawns regularly in summer to prevent weeds like Clover from flowering. If weed seeds have formed, use a catcher and don't put the clippings on the garden as mulch. Instead, put clippings in the compost where they can rot down. In winter remove lawn weeds by hand. For weeds like Dandelions, place a teaspoon of high nitrogen lawn fertiliser in the centre of the rosette of leaves to kill the weed.

* **Chemicals**

Although chemicals, also known as herbicides, have the advantage of a giving a fast result, we should only use them as a last resort. There are two main types. Non-selective herbicides kill all the plants they reach and you need to remember this if spraying weeds. On the other hand, selective herbicides only kill specific plants. Examples of selective herbicides include broadleaf herbicides which kill weeds such as Bindii in lawns.

For obvious reasons, chemicals are not to be used in vegetable gardens.

Clearly, weeds are very tough and have inbuilt advantages over other plants. But if we understand these advantages and use the range of techniques available to us, we are better equipped to prevent or minimize the impact of weeds in our gardens.

More on weeds...

Dangerous weeds

Some weeds are so serious that there are laws to control them. For example, some weeds, known as Weeds of National Significance, MUST be removed. These include Madeira Vine, Blackberry, Lantana and Asparagus Fern. Other plants are likely to be declared weeds in the near future. These 'sleeper weeds' include Jacaranda, Murraya and Agapanthus.

How to help save the bush from weeds

Weeds that escape from our garden into the bush or are carried there by birds can stop native seeds from germinating and can alter the bush to make it unsuitable for natives. They can also make the bush burn a lot faster. We can help by considering which plants to grow in our gardens and by participating in bush care activities. We can also use permeable paving and rain gardens to slow down stormwater to stop it carrying weeds seeds into the bush.

IN THE VEGIE PATCH IN JUNE by Christine Rethers

The cold weather has arrived, especially the night-times. You can protect delicate plants such as very young seedlings with a some horticultural fleece or even bubble wrap which can be placed over the plants at night and removed in the morning. The fleece is quite readily available on line and is not expensive. However, you can also protect vulnerable plants with a thick mulching of straw but remember to scrape it back a bit when you are watering otherwise the water may not penetrate. Once your plants are over about 10cm, they are usually pretty safe to leave alone as we do not get too many frosts in our part of Sydney. Plants like peas, silver beet and most of the brassicas should be racing away by now and we can look forward to harvesting them by August or September. Remember to keep up the watering during dry spells but preferably water in the morning so that the leaves have time to dry before the cold hits them in the evening as it can cause fungal problems on damp leaves. This also applies to most garden plants.

The vegetable of the month is undoubtedly the Choko - a member of the cucurbit family and originally from Mexico. Chokos (also known as chayote) have a very mild, neutral taste that is a cross between a zucchini, cucumber, and a subtle hint of green apple. Because the flavour is so subtle, a choko is considered a 'savoury fruit' that acts as an edible sponge, readily taking on the flavours of whatever you cook it with. They are versatile, low-calorie vegetables packed with fibre, vitamin C and heart-healthy antioxidants. Because they absorb the flavours of what they are cooked with, they are perfect for savory stir-fries, bulk-filling in stews and curries.

They are so easy to grow in our area and fruit prolifically. All you need is somewhere for them to scramble over - a fence, a shed or any sturdy structure they can climb on. They are not demanding regarding care - occasional feeding and a watering when it is very dry is about all they need. Their growth will slow down in winter and they respond well to giving them a good chop-back at the end of winter.

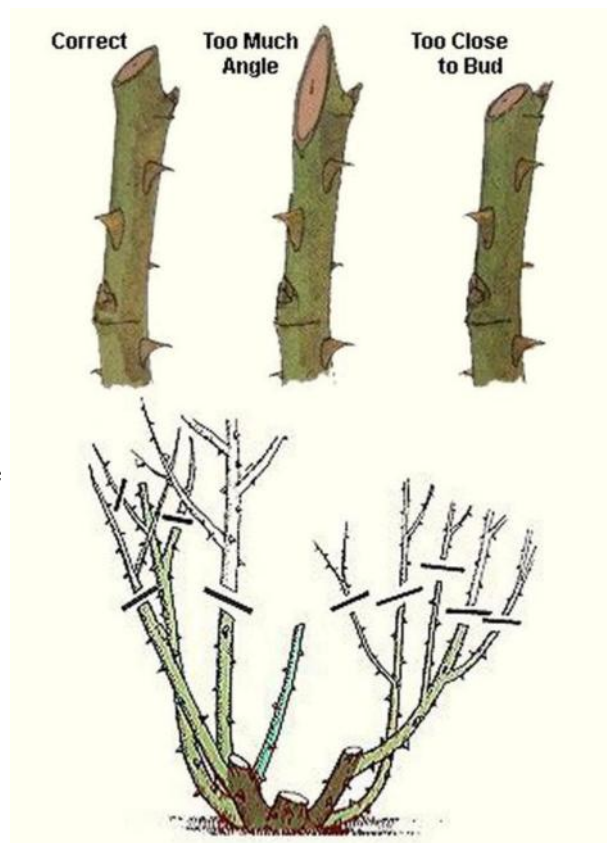


My recent harvest

When and How to Prune a Rose Bush: An Easy Step-by-Step Guide

When to prune: mid to late winter here in our area. The best time for pruning most roses is before they exit dormancy which is often marked by the buds starting to swell.

1. Remove remaining leaves: Clearing leaves helps in inspecting the bush's structure and identifying any hidden pests or diseases, crossing branches and old wood.
2. Start with dead wood: Cut off any dead wood - back to where there is healthy tissue.
3. Open up the center: Prune crossing branches to prevent damage and disease, aiming for a vase-like shape.
4. Remove thin growth: Eliminate growth thinner than a pencil for stronger development.
5. Prune remaining canes: Cut just above an outward-facing bud at a 45-degree angle to encourage outward growth.
6. Clean up: Properly dispose of all pruning debris and sterilize your tools to prevent disease spread.
8. Wait to fertilise until new growth starts to emerge.



YOUR JUNE GARDEN by Christine Rethers

Don't delay now in planting your bulbs - either in pots or straight into the garden. As always advised here, tulips are a one-season bulb for us and can be discarded after they have flowered. You will rarely get them to flower a second time in our climate. Don't let that put you off as there is nothing quite so beautiful as a pot full of flowering tulips. Daffodils and bluebells are fine to leave in place for a few years but they do need to be thinned out and the soil refreshed after about four years or so. I find that ranunculus and anemones will only last for one season for me and often just fail to come up the following year. I think they simply rot in our moderately wet summers.



Time is running out to order new bare-rooted roses. Most rose nurseries will send out their bare-rooted roses around the mid to end of July. Don't forget that roses need 6 to 8 hours of sunlight to flower well so pick your spot carefully. Now is a good time to prepare the area where the new rose will be planted. If you are replacing in the same place a rose that has died, it is a good idea to dig out a fair amount of the soil and replace it with new soil from another part of the garden. This is in case there are pathogens in the original soil that caused the rose to die. Dig a hole about 40cm to 60cm wide and about 40cm deep. Mix some well-rotted manure in with the soil. Soak your bare-rooted rose in a bucket of water when you receive it at least overnight. Build a small cone of soil in the centre of the hole and spread the roots evenly over it. Make sure the area where the rose has been grafted (bud-union) is above the level of the soil and back fill, firming down the soil gently, and then water in your rose with a seaweed solution.

Autumn and winter is a good time to have a look at your salvias. Most will need pruning but be careful not to go too low as you might find they will not come back from a really severe prune. I like to wait until I can see new growth coming from the base and then I prune the tops back quite hard. If they are still in flower, wait a bit longer as our bee population needs to have some flowers over the winter months to collect nectar and pollen from. There are some salvias that only flower in winter—including any of hybrids from *Salvia involucrata* and *Salvia karwinskii* such as *Salvia* 'Bethelli' with a beautiful pink flower and *Salvia* 'Timboon', which has a deep rich red flower. These are usually very tall plants up to 3m, suitable for the back of beds and borders, but are invaluable in winter for a burst of colour. They will of course be pruned after flowering - I prune mine down by half at the beginning of January.



Salvia involucrata x karwinskii (Flowering now—note the height!)